

a new group on the horizon

black women organized for action

by janice cobb

Six months ago a new organization took root out of a need to address itself to the crucial issues that affect Black women each day of their lives. Black Women Organized for Action (BWOA) found its beginnings within another group, Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA), the organization that spearheaded the first call for collective effort in the election of many of the Bay Area's top Black political candidates.

Starting under the direction of Aileen Hernandez, Eleanor Spikes, and Maxine Ussery, the roll call of BWOA has evolved since its inception, into an impressive listing of Black women prominent in political professional and business circles.

The leadership of the organization is elected on a quarterly basis: every three months two co-ordinators are voted to chair the monthly meetings of the general body.

Patsy Fulcher, a senior systems analyst with a major chemical firm and one of BWOA's present co-ordinators, applauds the group's revolving leadership as a means by which its full expertise can be utilized while at the same time minimizing identification of the group with any one individual. She envisions BWOA as an organization that will continue to deal with critical issues, "after the election is over, after the funds have been raised and after the candidate has

been put in office"

BWOA can be an involvement outlet for Black women a bit too aggressive to sit by the wayside as the direction is being charted, according to Ms. Fulcher, "A lot of women have said I'm tired of standing in the kitchen cooking



for a political fundraiser instead of being out front when the job assignments are being distributed."

BWOA has involved itself with a multitude of issues, one of the major ones being the General Mills Boycott. They are engaging in the distribution of a booklet titled, "The Suzy Baker Story" a documentation of the life of Suzy Baker, a little Black girl who plays with Play-doh, Monopoly, and Easy Bake Ovens, and eats Cheerios, Gorton Sea Foods and Fudge Brownies, all products of General Mills - a corporation that discriminates in hiring against women and minorities. They also seek the appointment of Black women on boards and commissions and have a complaint on file against the police department where women are not being given patrolman's status and consequently not being paid patrolman's wages.

Significantly, Black Women Organized for Action is planning a political workshop for the fall that promises to involve, "many of the major Black female elected officials." They conduct a talent bank, a collection of resumes on file much to the dismay of

those companies who complain of a lack of qualified minorities. They complete their service by publishing a newsletter that lists available job openings.

BWOA's future direction will be unquestionably determined by those women active in it. Maxine Ussery, EOC District Organizer views it as an advocate for Women's rights, "but not the extremes that Women's Lib has carried it - we're not into that."

She believes that many of the

problems that plague women over all are of little importance to Black women. "Very few Black men require us to take a back seat to them - they understand our position better than anybody -- we won't pitch Black men against Black women or Black women against white women -- that's not our bag."

Eleanor Spikes of the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing feels that BWOA's future will remain, out of necessity, flexible enough to deal with those spontaneous issues that arise unexpectedly in the lives of Black women. "Our future direction will depend upon the issues that come up and what we decide to become involved in."